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Judge declines PhRMA's request for injunction to stop Maine law

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A federal judge in Washington has rejected a request by the pharmaceutical industry to temporarily halt a Maine program that provides drug discounts to more than 120,000 low- and moderate-income residents.

U.S. District Judge Ricardo Urbina rejected a request for an injunction that would have stopped the program while the pharmaceutical industry appeals his Feb. 25 decision upholding the program.

That means the program will continue while the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America takes the case to the Court of Appeals.

Other states considering programs similar to Healthy Maine Prescriptions have contacted the state and are closely following the case.

"We still have a way to go, but this is one more victory in our attempt to obtain ongoing financial relief for low-income Maine residents in the form of discounted prescription drug prices," Kevin Concannon, commissioner of the Maine Department of Human Services, said Thursday.

The Healthy Maine Prescription program, which was authorized a year ago by the Legislature, requires pharmaceutical manufacturers to provide medication to people without drug coverage at the same discounts given to Medicaid recipients.

Those discounts average about 25 percent, the state says.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America maintains that the federal government is illegally allowing Maine to expand Medicaid. It also contends that Maine is not properly using its own funds to support the program.

In a statement, Concannon reiterated his criticism of PhRMA for its continued efforts to thwart the program.

"The pharmaceutical manufacturers have been shameless in their continuing intransigence and unwillingness to grant much-needed help to people of limited means who are faced with day to day dilemmas of paying for either food, housing or medicine," he said.